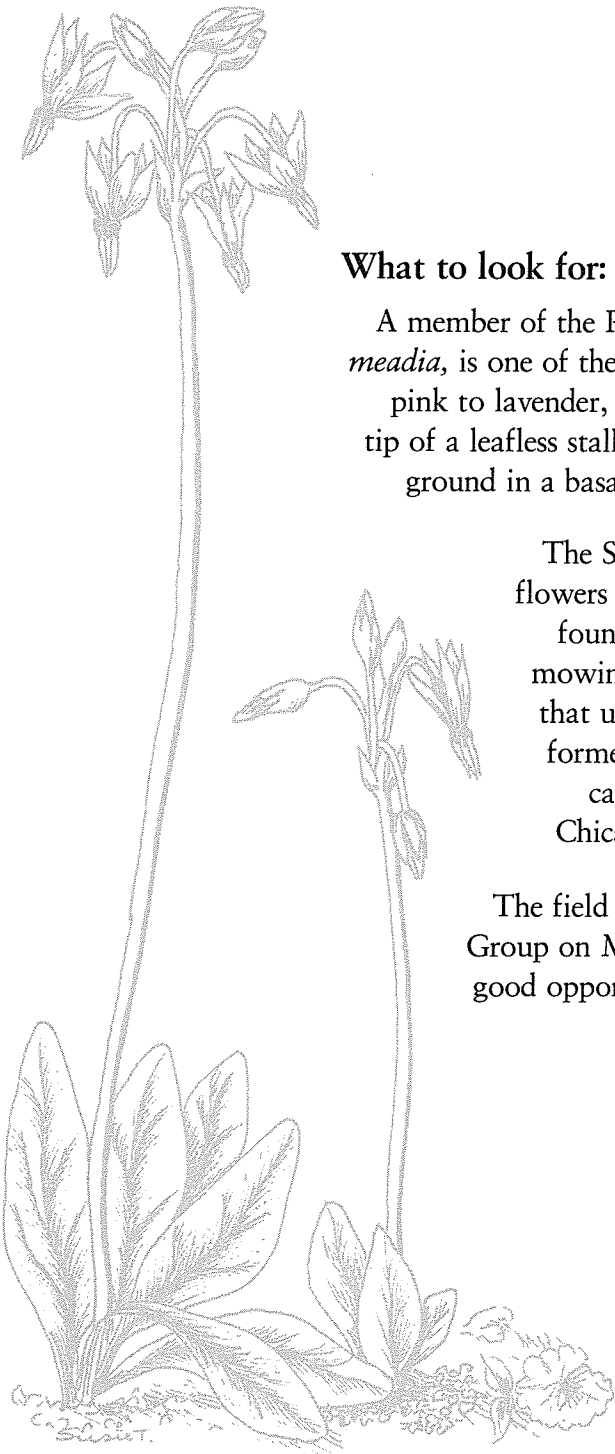


THE ILLINOIS PRAIRIE PATH NEWSLETTER

Spring, 1988



What to look for: Shooting Stars

A member of the Primrose Family (Primulaceae), the Shooting Star, *Dodecatheon meadia*, is one of the loveliest spring flowers. Varying in color from white to pale pink to lavender, the nodding flowers form an umbel of six to thirty blooms at the tip of a leafless stalk, ten to twenty-four inches tall. The leaves are all near the ground in a basal rosette.

The Shooting Star grows in woods and prairies throughout Illinois and flowers from mid-April to late May or early June. It is frequently found in old cemeteries and along railroads. Although regular mowing and leaf-dumping have destroyed most of the Shooting Stars that used to grow along the Illinois Prairie Path, especially in the former prairie remnant between Lombard and Villa Park, one magical carpet of these pale stars still appears every spring in the West Chicago Prairie adjoining the Illinois Prairie Path Geneva Spur.

The field trip sponsored by the West Chicago Prairie Stewardship Group on May 21 (see Spring Activities, page 4) should provide a good opportunity to enjoy this stellar display.

MAKE OUR TRAIL NAME OFFICIAL, DUPAGE COUNTY: AN EDITORIAL

The Illinois Prairie Path has become the most popular outdoor recreational facility in DuPage County, generating an estimated 300,000 user-trips annually. This brainchild of famed naturalist May Theilgaard Watts has achieved such acceptance because it meets a basic human need for open space close to home. As the population increases, this natural ribbon of green will become even more precious. Expensive homes being built next to the Path and realtors' ads mentioning proximity to it are proof of the value of such a unique resource to the people who know best, the local residents.

May Watts conceived the idea in 1963 of converting an abandoned railroad right-of-way into a recreational nature trail. She and a small group of friends named the infant trail Illinois Prairie Path in 1964 and started it on its way. More volunteers soon rallied to help. By 1971 they passed a major milestone when, after tremendous effort, the youthful Illinois Prairie Path achieved designation as a National Recreation Trail. Then followed a long period of steady growth as the volunteers improved the trail with limestone screenings, constructed steps on steep railroad embankments, and built three steel bridges, one with their own hands. The next major goal was to turn the mature successful trail over to a public, tax-supported agency. That objective was reached in 1986 when the DuPage County Board, recognizing the benefits of the trail in enhancing the quality of life of DuPage County citizens, agreed to manage the trail and assigned responsibility for development and maintenance to the capable staff of the DuPage County Division of Transportation.

May Watts had one more dream not realized in her lifetime: that some day the DuPage County Board would officially unite with the Illinois Prairie Path volunteers and legally recognize the name of their joint enterprise. Because that enterprise can continue to succeed only with the good will of all the people, that day has now come. DuPage County can finally show its pride in the good Americans who built the trail by officially and legally naming it Illinois Prairie Path.

ILLINOIS PRAIRIE PATH WINS STATE AWARD

The Illinois Prairie Path corporation has been informed that it is a State Award winner in the Take Pride in America Program. Jean Mooring, who submitted the nomination, received the letter of notification, dated December 9, 1987 and signed by Mark Frech, Director of the Illinois Department of Conservation, and Charles L. Tamminga, Program Coordinator. The letter says in part, "We are sending your nomination on to Washington, D.C., for the National Awards Program, and will notify you upon their determination."

The state citation reads as follows:



The federal Take Pride in America Awards Program is an outgrowth of President Reagan's challenge in his 1986 State of the Union message in which he urged us all as Americans to renew our awareness that public lands with their natural and cultural resources are "our lands to care for and about."

PEPS SAYS, "LET THERE BE LIGHTS!"

An energetic group in Elmhurst appropriately named PEPS (People for the Elmhurst Parks Foundation) has proposed an ambitious project for the Illinois Prairie Path and is now seeking funding. Emboldened by its success last year in creating a charming mini-park on the Path on the east side of Spring Road complete with a rustic gazebo, benches and drinking fountain, the group now wants to install old-fashioned lights along the trail. PEPS President Jean Haselhorst and Project Director Robert Glogovsky explained the plan to the Prairie Path board at its January meeting and said that 110 lights (like those on the Path in Villa Park) would be installed 100 feet apart along the entire two-mile Elmhurst section. The PEPS policy is to accept no direct tax monies but only donations from private individuals and agencies for the project. Estimated costs range between \$26,000 and \$61,000 depending on what proportion of needed materials and services is donated. After the presentation the Illinois Prairie Path board of directors discussed the plan and voted to approve it because lights will enhance the appearance of the Path in Elmhurst and promote safety.



PEPS - donated mini-park adjoins Illinois Prairie Path on east side of Spring Road, Elmhurst.

HANDICAPPED CAN ENJOY OUR TRAIL

A big advantage of trails built on abandoned railroad rights-of-way is their convenience for use by persons with disabilities. According to Richard Guerra, president of the American Handicapped Association, gentle grades and frequent access points at street crossings make trails like the Illinois Prairie Path ideal for people in wheelchairs. Guerra, a wheelchair user himself, spoke on behalf of handicapped trail people at the first national Rails-to-Trails Conference last fall. He says that he used to work out often on the Fox River Trail when he lived near it. Now he enjoys living near the Illinois Prairie Path but cautions that a trail with a limestone screening surface like the Prairie Path requires a wider type of tire on a wheelchair for better maneuverability. "It's a great trail!" says he.



Richard Guerra works out on Illinois Prairie Path Geneva Spur west of Industrial Drive.



Guerra demonstrates that barrier gate east of Industrial Drive makes access difficult for persons with disabilities.

Editor's note: The American Handicapped Association, a not-for-profit organization, lobbies on behalf of disabled persons especially to improve access to public facilities; provides speakers and educational services for civic groups and schools; and also locates specialized equipment to benefit the handicapped. The office address is 476 Main Street, West Chicago, IL 60185. Telephone: (312) 231-0220; also Voice-TDD (Telecommunications Device for the Deaf).

ILLINOIS TRAILS DAY SET FOR MAY 7

The Illinois Rails-to-Trails Coalition (a new chapter of the national Rails-to-Trails Conservancy) is sponsoring a statewide trail appreciation day on May 7. The event is planned to give citizens throughout the state a chance to demonstrate their interest in trails. To publicize the celebration, posters and brochures are being developed that will show the location of every long-distance trail in Illinois and that will describe the length, surface and points of interest along those trails.

To show our strong support for the trail movement in Illinois and across the nation, the Illinois Prairie Path will have volunteers manning an information booth and distributing the new brochures at Volunteer Park in Wheaton, the "hub" of the Path. Board members will also be on hand to lead bike rides on the three main branches of our trail. Coordinating the event for the Illinois Prairie Path board will be Esther Cryderman, 510-0610.

For more information on Illinois Trails Day, the upcoming trails brochure and poster or other trails questions, contact James Mackay of Illinois Rails-to-Trails, (312) 260-2065.



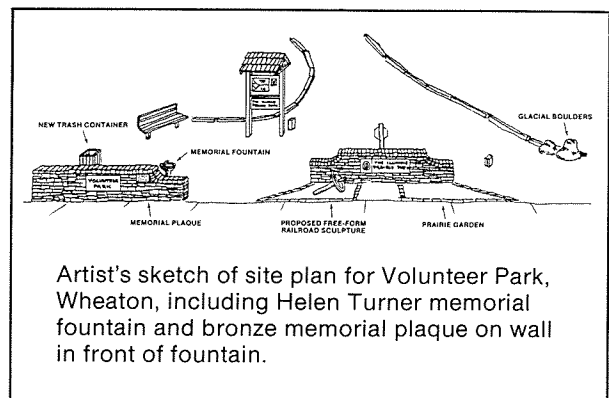
After the flood, Kline Creek bridge, August 16, 1987.

KLING CREEK BRIDGE IS FALLING DOWN

The hundred-year flood of August, 1987, caused much damage to the Prairie Path. Several sections of trail just resurfaced by the DuPage County Division of Transportation with limestone screenings, were washed out. The most serious result of the torrential rains was the partial collapse of the old CA&E railroad bridge over Kline Creek northwest of the intersection of Geneva and County Farm Roads. The center pier of the structure settled, undermined by the storm water which had been diverted a few years ago by the county public works department from the old ditch downstream from the bridge on the southwest side of the right-of-way to a new ditch upstream from the bridge on the northeast side of the right-of-way. This diverted storm water hits the center pier of the bridge at right angles with predictable results. The poor old bridge now has a definite swayback and appears unsafe for motor vehicles. Caution is advised for all users. According to Kevin Carroll, DuPage County Division of Transportation, the county plans to replace the bridge as soon as possible this spring.

PLANS FINALIZED FOR HELEN TURNER MEMORIAL

Paul Mooring, coordinator of the Helen Turner Memorial project, reports that the plan is complete and that permits have been obtained from DuPage County and the City of Wheaton. The drinking fountain, manufactured by Murdock, Inc., Cincinnati, Ohio, has been delivered to the Wheaton Public Works Department and the bronze memorial plaque ordered from House of Trophies, Wheaton, is ready for installation on the west wall. The original site design was done by Larry Steele, Wheaton city landscaper, and refinements were added by Paul. Limestone for the two low walls will be ordered this month. The city will start work on installing the water pipes and meter pit as soon as weather permits. A concrete contractor, stonemason, and signmaker (to sandblast the words Volunteer Park and The Illinois Prairie Path on two limestone blocks) have been selected. Completion date of the project will be in June.



Artist's sketch of site plan for Volunteer Park, Wheaton, including Helen Turner memorial fountain and bronze memorial plaque on wall in front of fountain.

Spring Activities, rain or shine

- Saturday, April 16 **Spring Cleanup** in every town and along entire length of Illinois Prairie Path. For information contact your municipal environmental protection commission; Tom Merrion, DuPage County Division of Transportation, 665-1155; or Bob Hargis, The Illinois Prairie Path corporation, 668-7377.

- Saturday, May 7 **Illinois Trails Day** celebration. (See story, page 3.) For information: Esther Cryderman, 510-0610.

- Saturday, May 14 **Work Day** to install Illinois Prairie Path display case sign. Leader: Paul Mooring, 469-4289.

- Saturday, May 21 **Two Field Trips** on the West Chicago Prairie Nature Preserve. One 6:00 a.m. early birder trip and one 9:00 a.m. prairie flower trip. Meet at northeast corner of Electronic Support Systems parking lot on the east side of Industrial Drive approximately ½-mile south of Hawthorne and just north of Western. For reservations: 790-4912. Leader: Mel Hoff, (312) 393-4715.

- Sunday, May 22 **Bird Walk** in Pratt's Wayne Woods Forest Preserve. Meet at 9:00 a.m. in far northwest parking lot. Bring binoculars, bird book, lunch and drink. Leader: Paul Mooring, 469-4289.

- Saturday, June 4 **Explore Four Bike Trails:** IPP, Fermilab, Kirk Road, and Fox River Trail. Approximately 30-mile loop trip. Leader: Nancy Hesler, 293-1062.

- Sunday, June 5 **Spring Hike** to explore a new section of the Fox River Trail. Ten-mile round trip. Meet at 9:00 a.m., Fox River Shores Forest Preserve parking area in Carpentersville. Go approximately one mile west of Rte. 25 on Lake Marion Road to Williams Road; then turn north to entrance. Brink lunch and drink. Leader: Dick Wilson, 299-7882. (8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.)

- Saturday, June 18 **Work Day** to install Illinois Prairie Path display case sign. Leader: Paul Mooring, 469-4289.

- Saturday, June 25 **Two Field Trips** on the West Chicago Prairie Nature Preserve. See above for Saturday, May 21.

— Jean C. Mooring, Editor —

DATED MATERIAL

RETURN POSTAGE GUARANTEED

P.O. Box 1086
616 Delles Road
Wheaton, Illinois
60189



MEMBERSHIP RATES: Individual \$10; Family \$15; Organization/Supporting \$20; Contributing \$25; Sustaining \$50; Patron \$100; Lifetime \$500

Nonprofit Organization
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Wayne, Ill. -60184
Permit No. 7